

Submitter: Christopher Wright

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Veterans and Emergency Management

Measure: SB1509

I support Senate Bill 1509.

During WWII, my grandfather, a second generation Japanese-American, proudly served in the US Army's 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Meanwhile, my grandmother, Chiz Tamura, and her family were incarcerated at the Tule Lake and Minidoka concentration camps. After the war my grandparents returned to their home in Hood River where they were met with hostility - unwelcomed in the valley they called home.

As a kid, I spent many summers visiting my grandparents at their home in Hood River. They were memorable trips, and they were invaluable learning opportunities for me. As I began to hear stories about my grandparent's lives during the war, I slowly weaved together a confounding narrative of the Japanese-American experience – a story characterized by hardship, perseverance, and heroism.

This was a difficult and confusing history for me to comprehend. Why were my grandparents treated so poorly in their home country? Why were they afraid to speak openly about their experiences during the war? I've been fortunate in my life to have access to the resources to answer some of these questions. However, many people are not aware of the complicated history of Japanese-Americans in Oregon and their service during the war.

As Hood River continues to grow and look towards its future, we need to recognize the communities that have contributed to the region, so important history is not forgotten. Dedicating Highway 35 to the Oregon Nisei Veterans is a timely opportunity to honor a community of people who bravely fought for the country they loved and called home. It's an opportunity to tell their story, so future generations can ask questions and learn, as I have.